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NIBBĀNASUTTA: AN ALLEGEDLY NON-CANONICAL SUTTA ON NIBBĀNA AS A GREAT CITY¹

The pages that follow carry a preliminary edition and translation of the *Nibbānasutta*, an "allegedly non-canonical"² Pali text

¹ This is a corrected and revised version of the edition and translation of the *Nibbānasutta* that was published as "The Sutta on Nibbāna as a Great City" in the commemorative volume for the Ven. Hammalava Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Essays: A Miscellany*, edited by Pollamure Sorata Thera, Laksman Perera, and Karl Goonasena (London: Sri Saddhatissa International Buddhist Centre, 1992), pp. 38–67.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance I received from Professor G.D. Wijayawardhana, Steven Collins, Jacqueline Filliozat, and P.B. Meegaskumbura in the preparation of this edition and translation. All read over a preliminary transcription of the manuscript and each made many suggestions for improving the text. Professor Wijayawardhana's and Steven Collins' comments also aided me in translating the text. P.B. Meegaskumbura made many helpful comments on the introduction. It was, however, only through the generosity and kindness of Jacqueline Filliozat that this edition was even possible. She made a copy of the original manuscript available to me and also made it possible for me to learn how to read *mūl* script. Finally, she compared my initial transcription with the original manuscript and made a number of improvements in the reading of the manuscript itself.

² I use this appellation to refer to texts which begin with the standard phrases of a sutta — "Evam me sutam. Ekam samayan ... " — but are not found in standard editions of the Pali canon. The term comes from K.D. Somadasa, who uses it in his *Catalogue of the Hugh Nevill Collection of Sinhalese Manuscripts in the British Library* (London: The British Library, and Henley-on-Thames: Pali Text Society, 1987), Vol. I, p. 27. I prefer this label to the alternative designations "apocryphal" or "counterfeit", since it is less likely to pre-judge the whole issue of the status of such texts; see Charles Hallisey, "Tuṇḍilovāda: An Allegedly Non-Canonical Sutta," *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, XV (1990), pp. 156–58. The use of the term "apocryphal" for texts whose inclusion in the Canon might be contested has been popularized by Padmanabh S. Jaini; see especially "Ākāravattārasutta: An 'Apocryphal' Sutta from Thailand," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 35 (1992), p. 193. The label "counterfeit Sutta" has been applied to the *Dasabodhisattuppattikathā* by the Ven. H. Saddhatissa (*The Birth*

probably of Southeast Asian origin. This edition is preliminary in two important ways. First, as will be discussed below, it is based on a single manuscript and it must be frankly admitted that no textual criticism which uses only a single exemplar can be taken as more than provisional. Second, the readings suggested for establishing an acceptable text must also be taken as strictly provisional, given the limitations of our knowledge of Pali language and literature in Southeast Asia.¹ While I hope that in the future the discovery of other manuscripts and the further study of Southeast Asian Pali will make it possible to improve on this provisional edition, I think that in the meantime the *Nibbānasutta* can make a contribution to our understanding of both the literary history and the conceptual patterns of the Theravāda Buddhist traditions.

Stories of the Ten Bodhisattvas and the Dasabodhisattuppattikathā [London: Pali Text Society, 1975], p. 16).

¹ One example will suffice to emphasize how limited knowledge of later Pali as a language may encourage us to jump to wrong conclusions when editing texts. In the manuscript of the *Nibbānasutta*, the letter “ñ” is usually not doubled; thus we consistently find ‘arañe’ for ‘araññe’, ‘pañā’ for ‘paññā’, ‘añata’ for ‘aññata’, etc. In each case I have given the latter spelling as a suggested reading in the footnotes. This might suggest that the spellings with the single “ñ” are mistakes in the manuscript, but Jacqueline Filliozat has pointed out (personal communication) that “ñ” is rarely doubled in Southeast Asian manuscripts. Others have noticed a more generalised orthographic convention of manuscripts written in the *mūl* script to suppress geminates; see François Martini, “Dasabodhisatta-uddesa”, *Bulletin de l’École Française d’Extrême Orient*, 36 (1936), p. 371 and G. Terral, “Samuddaghosajātaka — Conte Pāli tiré du *Paññāsa-jātaka*”, *Bulletin de l’École Française d’Extrême Orient* 48 (1956), pp. 312–13. Thus we need at least to consider that what might be taken as a fault is better taken as an example of Southeast Asian usage. I hope that this one example makes it clear that textual criticism of Southeast Asian Pali, indeed of any of the Pali of the late Theravāda, is conditioned by our limited knowledge of the linguistic variety permissible in later Pali literature.

The *Nibbānasutta*, as an allegedly non-canonical sutta, belongs to a class of Theravādin literature which has been unduly neglected by scholars. Such literature, however, was apparently known to and accepted as authoritative by Buddhaghosa. In *Atthasālinī*, he makes a point by referring to “a sutta which was not composed at a council.”¹

We can begin to have a more accurate estimation of the significance of such texts by carefully considering their role as instructional aids and vehicles for the transmission of the “Way of the Elders.” When we do so, we see that the production of allegedly non-canonical suttas in the Theravāda is not always analogous to the creation of the Mahāyāna sūtras, superficial similarities notwithstanding, in so far as they frequently did not formulate new teachings.² Such compositions were apparently one response to a fundamental problem continually faced by the Theravāda, a problem which was recognized by Louis Finot seventy-five years ago: “The Buddhist Canon is not an easy study: it discourages by its mass and its difficulties the enthusiasm of the most fearless . . . It was necessary to be concerned about making this *rudis indigestaque moles* accessible, either by condensing it in the form of a summary, or by combining scattered elements from this or that part of the doctrine, or finally by simply detaching from this immense book (i.e. the *tipiṭaka*) some leaves which interested more particularly the

¹ Asl 65.

² Of course, some allegedly non-canonical texts include notions which appear novel when compared with norms accepted in the Pali Canon. See Ven. H. Saddhatissa, *The Birth Stories of the Ten Bodhisattas*, pp. 7–14, and P.S. Jaini, *Ākāravattārasutta*, pp. 197–98. A more extreme example of novelty in an allegedly non-canonical *sutta* is found in the Sinhala-language *Sumana Sūtraya*, a work dating to the colonial period of Sri Lanka’s history and described by Kitsiri Malalgoda in his article on Buddhist Millennialism (Kitsiri Malalgoda, “Millennialism in Relation to Buddhism”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42 [1970], pp. 424–41).

spiritual life or the practice of the community.”¹ These different responses, however, are not easily distinguished. The *Nibbānasutta* appears to be a combination of the first two types of response specified by Finot: it is a summary, although it gathers together in a significant way material scattered in the Pāli canon and commentaries. Moreover, allegedly non-canonical suttas like the *Nibbānasutta*, circulated individually, as did even those texts which we might somewhat ironically call “uncontestedly canonical suttas”; but they also circulated in a variety of *ad hoc* anthologies.² The co-existence of summaries and anthologies

¹ Louis Finot, “Recherches sur la littérature Laotienne”, *Bulletin de l’École Française d’Extrême Orient* 17 (1917), p. 71.

² Some idea of the range and variety of *ad hoc* anthologies, Finot’s third type of response, can be gained from K.D. Somadasa’s catalogue of the Nevill Collection in the British Library; see note 2 on p. 97 above. Some anthologies, like the very large *Suttajātakanidānānisāmsa* and the *Suttasaṅgaha* (see Ven H. Saddhatissa, “Literature in Pāli from Laos”, *Studies in Pāli and Buddhism: A Memorial Volume in Honor of Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap*, edited by A.K. Narain [Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1979], pp. 327–28), became relatively stable texts in their own right, and thus have had more enduring identities than other more ephemeral, and titleless, anthologies. They, like all of the anthologies, await sustained study, although a unique portion of the *Suttajātakanidānānisāmsa* has been edited by George Cœdès; see “Dhammadāya”, *Adyar Library Bulletin*, 20 (1956), pp. 248–86; the *Suttasaṅgaha* is available in an edition prepared by B. Dhīrānanda Mahāthero (n.p. Vijjāsāgarākhyā Yantrālaya, 1903). For a description of the *Pitaka dan sām*, a smaller anthology, “very widespread in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia”, see George Cœdès, *Catalogue des manuscrits en Pāli, Laotien, et Siamois provenant de la Thaïlande* (Copenhagen: Royal Library, 1966), pp. 70–76. In each anthology, the excerpted portions from the canon remain Pāli (i.e. canonical), which helps to explain the confusion over whether or not the *Suttasaṅgaha* was added to the canon in Burma; see H. Oldenberg, “List of Manuscripts in the India Office Library”, *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* I (1882), p. 80, and V. Fausbøll, “Catalogue of the Mandalay Manuscripts in the India Office Library”, *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* IV (1896), p. 31 [cited at Collins, “On the Very Idea of the Pāli Canon,” p. 108, note 11]. See also on the *Suttasaṅgaha*, K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), pp. 31, 172.

with collections of the more diffuse canonical literature parallels the analogous tension in the Theravādin tradition between the actual diversity of thought and practice noted by historians and observers of the contemporary Theravāda and an assumption of doctrinal systematicity idealized by Theravādin intellectuals and by scholars of the Theravāda.

Recognizing that the canon was generally transmitted in condensed parts and in summaries is of course relevant for reconstructing the range of Buddhist thought and practice operative in any given historical context. But although we are now beginning to appreciate better the importance of such texts for our understanding of “Buddhism on the ground,” we still have little idea of the actual numbers of such texts, the extent of their originality, or the processes of their composition. The *Nibbānasutta* makes a valuable contribution to the pool of information that will be necessary for answering the latter questions.

The *Nibbānasutta* displays, at least in part, the processes through which summaries and new suttas were created in the Theravāda tradition. As a discourse, the *Nibbānasutta* is organized around a narrative about a man journeying to a great city. This short narrative is subsequently used to order a series of metaphors about Buddhist practice, salvation, samsāra, and nibbāna in a coherent, if loose, fashion. It is striking that a similar metaphorical reinterpretation of a narrative is used to provide a summary of doctrine and practice in the *Ānguttara Nikāya* and its commentary. The canonical passage, which is part of a conversation between the Buddha and the Sakyan prince Vappa, reads:

Just as, O Vappa, a shadow of a tree (*thūnam*) is seen, and a man might come there, bringing a hoe and basket, and he might cut the tree at the root, and having cut the root, he might dig it up, and digging, he might lift up the roots, even as much as a

tube holds of the fragrant *usīra* root. He might break up that tree piece by piece, and destroying it piece by piece he might chop it, and chopping it, he might splinter it, and then dry it in the wind and heat, and having dried it in the wind and heat, he might burn it with fire and turn it into ashes. Having turned it into ashes, he might scatter it in a strong wind or wash it away in a river with a swift current. Thus the broken roots of that tree whose shadow appeared are uprooted and completely destroyed and in the future will be things that do not arise again. Just exactly so the six *satatavīhāra* are attained by the monk whose mind is completely freed.¹

The commentary, the *Manorathapūrāṇī*, finds in the connecting adverb *evam* an opportunity to explain the metaphorical significance of this narrative:

¹ A II 199: *seyyathāpi Vappa thūṇam paṭicca chāyā paññāyati, atha puriso āgaccheyya kudālapiṭakam ādāya, so tam thūṇam mūle chindeyya, mūle chetvā palikhaneyya, palikhanetvā mūlāni uddhareyya antamaso usīranālimattāni pi. so tam thūṇam khaṇḍākhaṇḍikam chindeyya, khaṇḍākhaṇḍikam chetvā phāleyya, phāletvā sakalikam sakalikam kareyya, sakalikam sakalikam karitvā vātātpe visoseyya, vātātpe visosetvā agginā daheyya, agginā dahitvā masim kareyya, masim katvā, mahāvāte vā opuneyya nadiyā vā sīghasotāya pavāheyya. evam hi 'ssa Vappa yā thūṇam paṭicca chāyā sā ucchinnamūlā tālāvatthukatā anabhāvakatā āyatī anuppādadharmā. evam eva kho Vappa evam sammāvīmutticittassa bhikkhuno cha satatavīhāra adhigatā honti.*

PTSD defines *satatavīhāra* as “a chronic state of life”; PTSD s.v. *satata*, p. 672. They are modes of life limited to those who have destroyed the *āsavas*.

It should be noted that although this narrative resonates with the imagery of the great tree of *kilesas* in the *Nibbānasutta*, its imagery of uprooting roots is in fact more prominent throughout Theravādin literature; for a *locus classicus* of this metaphor, see Dhp 338.

Just exactly so¹ this is the application of the simile here: individual life is to be known as like the tree (*rukko*), the *kamma* of good and bad deeds is like the shadow of the tree, the *yogāvacaro* is like the person desiring to put a stop to the shadow, wisdom is like the hoe (*kuddāla*, i.e. mammary), concentration is like the basket, insight meditation is like the tool for uprooting (*khaṇitti*), the opportunity for destroying ignorance with the path of the *arahant* is like the digging up of the roots with the spade, the opportunity for seeing the influence of the sensory elements is like the the opportunity for breaking up (the whole tree) piece by piece, the opportunity for seeing the influence of the elements of sense-perception is like the opportunity for chopping (the tree), the opportunity for seeing the influence of the physical elements is like the opportunity for splintering (the tree), the opportunity for creating mental and bodily exertion is like the opportunity for drying (the broken parts) in the wind and heat, the burning of the *kilesas* with knowledge is like the burning (the pieces) with fire, the continuing existence of the five *khandhas* is like the making of ashes, the unmendable cessation of the five *khandhas* is like the scattering of the destroyed roots in a great wind or washing them away in the current of a river, and the state of the non-manifestation, without any further arising, of *khandhas* which are the fruits of previous actions in a new birth is to be known as being like the attained condition of non-manifestation because of the scattering (in the wind) and the washing away (in the river).²

¹ The term *evam* is sometimes glossed in the commentaries as being a “term of comparison” (*upamāvacana*); see for example Pj I 208.

² Mp III 179–80: *evam eva kho ti ettha idam opammasamsandanam: rukko viya hi attabhāvo daṭṭhabbo, rukkham paṭicca chāyā viya kusalākusalakamman, chāyam appavattam kātukāmo puriso viya yogāvacaro, kuddālo viya paññā,*

In the quotation above, the *Manorathapūrani* names the interpretive strategy which it employs to connect these two passages as *opammasaṃsandanā*.¹ The presence of this same interpretive strategy in the *Nibbānasutta* suggests that its composition may have followed a generic pattern already well-established in earlier texts; that is, the general process at work in the creation of summary texts included the use of models found in other texts. This suggestion finds some confirmation when we look at the serial simile of the “city of Nibbāna” in the *Nibbānasutta* which itself seems to build on patterns already present in the commentaries and other types of Theravādin literature.²

Moreover, as indicated by the passages found in the *Nibbānasutta* which are taken from the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Theragāthā*, the process of creating new texts included the direct use of materials found in older texts. We see a similar use of older material in other allegedly non-canonical suttas, such as the *Tundilovādasutta* and the *Ākāravattārasutta*.³ Indeed, the process of making new texts out of the materials of older texts seems to have become quite common in the later Theravāda; we can refer here to such Pāli texts as the *Jinakālamāli*,

pitakam viya *samādhi*, *khaṇitti* viya *vipassanā*, *khaṇittiyā* *mūlānam* *palikhāṇakālo* viya *arahattamaggena* *avijjāya chedanakālo*, *khaṇḍākhaṇḍam* *karaṇakālo* viya *khandhavasena* *diṭṭhakālo*, *phāṇakālo* viya *āyatanavasena* *diṭṭhakālo*, *sakalī karaṇakālo* viya *dhātuvasena* *diṭṭhakālo*, *vātātpe visosanakālo* viya *kāyikacetasikassa* (taking variant reading for *kāyikavācasikassa*) *viriyassa* *karaṇakālo*, *agginā* *dahanakālo* viya *ñānena* *kilesānam* *dahanakālo*, *masikaranakālo* viya *dharamāṇaka-pañcakkhandhakālo*, *mahāvāte opunanakālo* viya *nadīsote pavāhanakālo* *chinnamūlakānam* *pañcannam* *khandhānam* *appaṭisandhikanirodho*, *opunanapavāhanehi* *appaññattika-bhāvupagamo* viya *punabbhave* *vipākakhandhānam* *anuppādena* *apannattikabhāvo* *veditabbo*.

¹ See as well A II 201 and Mp III 181–82; Vism 346; Sv (I) 127.

² For example, Mil 330–45; see as well Bv-a 155–56; Sv (III) 881; Sv-pt III 78.

³ Compare *Tundilovāda* 176–77 and Bv-a 121; *Tundilovāda* 186 and Bv-a 121; see Jaini, *Ākāravattārasutta*, 197, 199, 200 note 13, 201 notes 14–15, 209 note 21.

the *Pathamasambodhi*, the *Jinamahānidāna* and the *Saṅgītiyavāṃsa*, all composed in Thailand.¹ It should be noted that one result of this process of composing new texts would be a blurring of the distinctions between canonical and non-canonical literature.

An awareness of the special problems which the Theravāda faced in transmitting a systematic, but complex doctrine abstracted from a large and diffuse literary tradition is important for understanding the continuing literary activities of Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. This awareness above all allows us to acknowledge the conditions under which new suttas, such as the *Nibbānasutta*, could have been composed and accepted in the Theravāda; it is easy to see that the very idea of a closed canon might well have functioned more as a rhetorical marker than as a strictly closed list in contexts where the canon circulated and was known in its parts rather than as a whole.² But we should be careful not to limit the ramifications of this fact to the admission that “new” texts could probably find some acceptance in such contexts; we could make this admission and still care little for the contents of these individual suttas on the grounds that they seem to add little to the scholarly understanding of the doctrinal orientations of the

¹ *Jinakālamāli* (London: Pali Text Society, 1962), *Jinamahānidāna* (Bangkok: National Library — Fine Arts Department, 1987); *Saṅgītiyavāṃsa* (Bangkok: 1926). On the *Pathamasambodhi*, see George Cœdès, “Une vie Indochinoise de Buddha: La *Pathamasambodhi*,” in *Mélanges d’Indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou* (Paris: Institut de Civilisation indienne, 1968), pp. 217–27. There is some precedent for this process of composition in the Pali Canon itself, most notably in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and the *Ānguttara-nikāya*.

² For a discussion of the significance of the idea of a closed canon in the Theravāda, see Steven Collins, “On the Very Idea of the Pali Canon,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* XV (1990), pp. 89–126; for a discussion of the idea of the *tipitaka* functioning as a marker for “orthodoxy”, see François Bizot, *Le figuier à cinq branches* (Paris: École Française d’Extrême Orient, 1976), p. 21. Bizot argues that the term *tipiṭaka* “refers less to a collection of texts than to an ideological concept.”

Theravāda. This would be unfortunate, since their condensed format may in fact display relative emphases of doctrine and practice within the Theravādin traditions which might otherwise be hard to discern.

We have so far noted the elaboration of the metaphor of “the city of Nibbāna” in the *Nibbānasutta* as an illustration of the processes involved in the composition of new texts in the Theravāda. When we turn to the contents of the *Nibbānasutta*, we see that this metaphor is indeed a helpful device for listing and linking a variety of doctrinal items and practices; the different parts of a city are associated with various aspects of Buddhist life. It is thus easy to see that such a metaphor could be conducive to the *Nibbānasutta*’s functional role as a summary of the *Dhamma*. While recognizing this, we should be careful not to ignore the role that such imagery may have had in generating “religio-aesthetic experiences” which would have enriched an understanding of particular doctrinal points and which may have also motivated individuals to practice the Buddhist religious life.¹

As already noted, metaphorical applications of a city to the constituents of Buddhist life have a long history in the Theravāda; examples are found in the *Milinda-pañha* as well as in the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*, the *Sumanagalavilāsinī*, and the *Tundilovādasutta*.² We can find a very pleasant example of such an application in the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*, a thirteenth-century Sinhala translation of the *Dhammapada Atthakathā*, a book which itself was intended to be an instructional aid to those on the way to the city of Nibbāna³:

¹ The possible danger of overlooking the significance of metaphors in “religio-aesthetic experiences” was emphasised to me by P.B. Meegaskumbura. In this regard, it is thus worth noting the prominent place of metaphorical sequences in both the *Ākāravattārasutta* and the *Tundilovādasutta*.

² Mil 330–45; Bv-a 155–56; Sv (III) 881; Sv-pt III 78; *Tundilovāda* 192–94.

³ Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Jewels of the Doctrine* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 3.

Thus, having begged for alms in the countryside of the *arahat*, he arrived finally at the city of the Teachings of the King of the Universe, the Enlightened Buddha.

That city had a long wall made of Morality, a moat made of the restraints, Fear and Shame, a city gate of Wisdom, with lintels of Effort, a protective column of Faith, and watchmen of Mindfulness. It had a nine-storied palace of the Nine Spiritual Attainments, four roads of the Fourfold Path going in four directions and the Three Signs, Impermanence, Sorrow, and Soullessness, pointing in the three directions. It had also the Hall of Justice named the “Rules of the Monastic Order” and a royal thoroughfare called “The Path of Mindfulness.” There were market stalls selling the flowers of Higher Knowledge, stalls selling perfumes of Moral Conduct, and fruit stalls selling the Fruits of the Path. There were also stalls selling medicinal preparations of The *Dharmas* of the Thirty-Seven Constituents of Enlightenment¹ for curing the disease of Defilements, and which could destroy Decay and Death. In addition, there were stalls full of the gems of Moral Conduct and Contemplation, which could bring Enlightenment. There was a stall that was filled with the blessings of high status, wealth, long life, good health, good looks, and intelligence; and also the blessings of the human world, the heavenly worlds, the Brahma worlds, and of *nirvāna*.²

¹ I have modified Obeyesekere’s translation at this point.

² Obeyesekere, *Jewels of the Doctrine*, p. 207; this is a translation of *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* (Colombo: Sri Lanka Oriental Studies Society, 1985), I.126. This passage obviously owes much to the account of the “City of Righteousness” in Mil 330–45.

Each of these associations between a Buddhist idea or practice and a part of a city could be interpreted, apparently,¹ through a process of comparison which would specify on what basis the two things are juxtaposed in the metaphor; the *Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī* describes this process as asking “What is it like, because of what?”² The *ṭīkā* on the *Dīgha Nikāya*, for example, glosses the simile that *sīla* is like a wall by saying: “*Sīla is like a wall* because it has the nature of protecting completely those who attain it.”³ It is particularly interesting, as a comparison with the similar application of the metaphor in the *Nibbānasutta* displays, that there is no fixed association between the parts of a city and a Buddhist counterpart. For example, the door or gate (*dvāra*) to the city of Nibbāna is variously said to be *sīla*,⁴ *dāna*,⁵ the *ariyamagga*,⁶ and *ñāṇa*.⁷ This variability is further evidence that the different examples of the serial simile of the city of Nibbāna may be the products of different applications of a common process rather than derivations from a single source.

This variability also suggests that the serial simile might be derivative from and secondary to a more fundamental conventional

¹ I say “apparently” since as I mentioned in the introduction to *Tuṇḍilovādasutta* (p. 163), it is not always self-evident what the similarities between the two juxtaposed elements might be, and most often we are dependent on commentarial glosses to specify the intended similarities.

² Sv (III) 881: *tathā ‘kim kena sadisan’ ti ce . . .* This might be an allusion to the method of instruction mentioned in the *Naṅgalīsa Jātaka* (Ja I 448): “eliciting comparisons and reasons” (*upamañ ca kāraṇañ ca kathāpeti*). The method is explicitly used in the *Nibbānasutta* when Nibbāna is compared to the moon, the sun, the earth, a mountain, the ocean.

³ Sv-pt III 78.

⁴ *Tuṇḍilovāda* 177.

⁵ *Tuṇḍilovāda* 174, 193.

⁶ Sv (III) 881; this is a common gloss on the notion of “the door to that without death” (*amatadvāra*) — see M I 353, S I 137, Vin I 5, etc.

⁷ *Nibbānasutta*, see p. 122 below.

metaphor of the city of Nibbāna, which itself is linked to the conventional metaphor of Nibbāna as a “place”. In this regard, quite significantly, the contents of the *Nibbānasutta* help us to understand and thus to appreciate better the cognitive import of this conventional metaphor which is found throughout much of Theravādin literature, including Buddhaghosa’s commentaries. On the basis of what can be seen in the *Nibbānasutta*, we may be able to avoid the temptation to dismiss a common image of this sort as an over-used “literary ornament” or “figure of speech”, since we see in this text that it may not actually function as such. Rather, we can see that such common images are probably better understood as “conventional metaphors”, part of the normal ways that Buddhists talk about, conceive and even experience their own situations.¹

When the *Nibbānasutta*, using the method just mentioned, compares Nibbāna to a collection of good things (*sudhammā*), on the grounds that both are collocations or combinations (*saṃodhāna*), it makes a point which is quite relevant to understanding the image of a city as a metaphor for Nibbāna. In this context, we can recall that a city is sometimes defined on the basis of its combining a physical layout with buildings, and inhabitants,² and with this in mind, we can see that it is

¹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 51. In a related vein, see the valuable discussion of one important set of images and their relations with the *anattā* doctrine in the Theravāda by Steven Collins in *Selfless Persons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), and more generally, see Diana Eck, “The Dynamics of Indian Symbolism,” *The Other Side of God*, edited by Peter L. Berger (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 157–81.

² See, for example, Bv-a 66–67 (on Bv IIA 3–4): “(3) The City was complete in all respects. It engaged in every industry, (4) was possessed of the seven kinds of treasures, crowded with all kinds of people; prosperous as a deva-city, it was a dwelling place for doers of merit. Therein *complete in all respects* means: possessed of all the constituent parts of a city, with city gateways, halls and so forth. . . .” (I.B. Horner, translator, *The Clarifier of the Sweet Meaning* (London:

significant that the serial simile specifies not only the buildings of the city, but the flocks of birds (i.e. the city's inhabitants, the arahants, etc.) which frequent it.¹ We can also recall that a traditional gloss of a city is that it is *rakkhāvaraṇagutti*: it protects, shuts out, and provides security.² Thus we might conclude that the significance of the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna lies less in its individual parts, which we have seen can have varying associations, but rather in its being a general picture which defines Nibbāna as something with both form, coherence, and function.³ This insight is applicable to the use of the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna scattered throughout Theravādin literature.

Although the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna occurs frequently in commentarial and post-commentarial Theravādin literature,⁴ it apparently does not occur in those parts of the canon

Pali Text Society, 1978), pp. 99–100. For a similar definition of a city, see Totagamuve Sri Rahula, *Pañcikāpradīpaya*, edited by R. Tennakoon (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, 1962), p. 359.

¹ See the pictorial representation of Nibbāna, which includes both a tank and attending birds, in the illustration from the *Traibhūmikathā*, found in *The Three Worlds According to King Ruang*, translated by Frank E. Reynolds and Mani B. Reynolds (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Series, 1982).

² This gloss was told to me by P.B. Meegaskumbura.

³ For a similar use of this city metaphor with respect to diligence in the religious life, see Dhp-a III 488, on Dhp 315. See as well the “Nagaropamasuttanta” at A IV 106–13 and Mp IV 53–66.

⁴ It may also be properly said that the metaphor predates the commentaries, since it is found at Mil 333. Moreover, the metaphor occurs in non-Theravādin literature; see Dieter Schlingloff (ed.): *Ein Buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 162R5 (p. 169); J. Duncan M. Derrett, *A Textbook for Novices: Jayarakṣita's “Perspicuous Commentary on the Compendium of Conduct by Śrīghāna*” (Turin: Pubblicazioni di “Indologica Taurinensis”, 1983), p. 17; E.H. Johnston (ed.), *The Saundarananda of Aśvaghoṣa* (Delhi: Motilal Barnarsidass, 1975), p. 106; R.E. Emmerick, *The Sūtra of Golden Light* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990), p. 24 [amṛtāpura]; R.E. Emmerick, *The Book of Zambasta* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 153, 303, 317, 421; Giotto Canevacini, *The Khotanese Saṅghāṭasūtra* (Ph.D. Dissertation,

which are usually considered to be early, that is the Vinaya and the four Nikāyas. The metaphor coheres, however, with another conventional metaphor in the canon — that conditions and experiences are places (*thāna*), and thus I do not think that there would be anything automatically controversial or objectionable about it as a piece of imagery.¹ Without speculating about the actual origins of the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna, we can at least say that it may have been used as an image because it evoked and elaborated the conventional metaphor of Nibbāna as a place, which is found in the canon. Furthermore, the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna was apparently grounded in the canon by commentators' reinterpreting canonical references to cities as references to the city of Nibbāna. For example, Sāriputta uses a simile of a border city and its watchman to convey his limited knowledge of the Buddha's maximal greatness in the *Sampasādaniyasutta* and in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*; this simile is glossed in Buddhaghosa's

University of Hamburg, 1992), p. 213. Analogous applications of the metaphor of a city are also found in medieval Indian Buddhist inscriptions; see the references to *muktipura* (thirteenth century) found at Grosrawa (*Indian Antiquary* 17 [1888], p. 310); to *jinapura* (thirteenth century) found at Bodhgaya (*Indian Antiquary* 10 [1881], p. 342); and to *praśamapura* (fifth century) found at Ajanta (Ghulam Yazdani, *Ajanta* [Delhi: Swat Publications, 1983] Pt IV, p. 115). The metaphor is also found in the Chinese translation of the Dharmaguptaka version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*; see André Bareau, *En suivant Buddha* (Paris: Lebaud, 1985), p. 289. This text apparently takes “entering the city of *nirvāṇa*” as referring to *parinirvāṇa*. The diversity of these examples suggests at least that the metaphor of the city of *nirvāṇa* was in common usage among the different Buddhist traditions. I wish to thank Gregory Schopen for bringing the inscriptive, Aśvaghoṣa, and Dharmaguptaka examples to my attention.

¹ As the entry on “nibbāna” in the PTSD says: Nibbāna “is a reality, and its characteristic features may be described, may be grasped in terms of earthly language, in terms of space (as this is the only means at our disposal to describe abstract notions of time and mentality)”; PTSD, s.v. *nibbāna*, p. 362b. See as well PTSD, s.v. *thāna*.

commentary as referring to the city of Nibbāna.¹ The *tīkā* to this passage then uses the metaphor to extend understanding and insight through the same process of comparing and giving reasons we have already noted: “*Nibbāna is like a city* because it is to be approached by those seeking it, and because it is the condition (*thāna*) of the attainment of *sukha* without any dangers for those who reach it.”²

We can gain some further understanding of the connotations of the metaphor as a whole if we look at two different uses of the image of the city in the *Dhammapada Atthakathā*. The first compares the mind to a city and comments on the stanza, “Securing this mind as a citadel”.³

As a city: A city having a deep moat, encircled by a wall, containing gates and watchtowers, is firm from outside; inside, it is fitted out with well-apportioned streets, squares, crossroads, and shopping areas. Thieves come from without, saying, “Let us loot it !” [But] being unable to enter, [they] remain as if confronting, and being checked by, a [mighty] rock. As one standing in the city [attacks such] a horde of robbers with many kinds of weaponry — single-edged [weapons], and so on — in exactly the same way, *securing*: making firm his “insight-mind”, as if it were a citadel⁴

The second application of the city metaphor in the *Dhammapada* compares the body to a shed for storing grain which in turn is said to be a city, in part because it is constructed with various

¹ Sv (III) 881. The commentary on the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* refers readers to this gloss; Sv (II) 538. For similar incidental glosses using the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna, see Ap-a 291 (on verse 133); Bv-a 155; Vv-a 284.

² Sv-pt III 78.

³ Dhp 40: *nagarūpamāṇa cittam idam thapetvā*.

⁴ John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana, translators, *The Dhammapada*, (New York: Oxford, 1987), p. 128.

parts, and also because such a shed is a “protected structure.”¹ We see in these two uses of the metaphor associations which are obviously shared with the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna. First, all three applications apparently assume that a city is defined by its various constituent parts, arranged in an ordered whole which is “firm from outside,” that is a stable and independent condition in its own right. The image also portrays Nibbāna as a pleasing place inside. This holistic image would seem, then, to lend considerable coherence to a theoretical vision of Nibbāna and its connection to Buddhist soteriological practices.

Finally, I would like to note that the image of the city of Nibbāna could suggest a continuum between Nibbāna and the possible forms of rebirth found in samsāra. The same conventional metaphor that “defines” existential conditions as “places” (*thāna*), which we have already seen with reference to Nibbāna, was also used with respect to some forms of rebirth which are possible in samsāra. Heavens, above all, are defined as cities.² This homology between heavens and Nibbāna as “cities” creates, in turn, a double relation between Nibbāna and samsāra. On the one hand, they are still different kinds of things, and are thus best understood doctrinally as opposed to one another, as when we contrast *asaṅkhata* Nibbāna with *saṅkhata* samsāra, or when we contrast the *sukha* of Nibbāna with the *dukkha* of samsāra. On the other hand, heavens as “cities” could also be construed as merely, even if immeasurably, different in degree from the “City of Nibbāna.” As the

¹ Dhp 150; Carter and Palihawadana, p. 217.

² See, for example, S IV 202; Vv-a 285; Ja I 47, 49, 52; *The Three Worlds According to King Ruang*, pp. 218, 223–35, 250. The realm of the dead is also sometimes compared to a city or even called a city: *yamapura*; see *The Three Worlds According to King Ruang*, p. 68 and W.F. Gunawardhana, *Guttīla Kāvya Varnanā* (Colombo: Lake House, 1962), p. 208 (verse 317). For a discussion of the symbolism of the royal city in the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon, see Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 50–56.

Traibhūmikathā, a fourteenth-century Thai-language cosmological treatise, says: “The treasure of Nibbāna brings a high degree of pleasure, happiness, and tranquility; nothing can be found to equal it.”¹ This sequence of images of cities may lie behind the location of Nibbāna at the pinnacle of a cosmological hierarchy as has been frequently noted in ethnographic studies of contemporary Theravādin Buddhism.

The manuscript utilized here is now kept in the collections of the École Française d’Extrême Orient in Paris under the reference number EFEO Pali 30. It is a short manuscript, four *ola* leaves in length, and is written in the *mūl* script. It contains two texts: the *Nibbānasutta*, and a fragment of another text called the *Jarāsutta*. A covering leaf is inscribed: *bra mahāgaranibbānasūtravāṇṇanā niṭhitā / buddhassa parinibbānato aṭṭhapaññāsādhike catusatadvesahassame byaggha-saṃvacchare siṭesena (?) likkhāmi tamidam*. The alternative title given here, *Mahāgaranibbānasuttavāṇṇanā*, specifies what may have been taken as the main point of the text, the metaphor of the city of Nibbāna; I have followed this covering-leaf’s example in the title of this paper. Given the blurring between canonical and non-canonical literature which we noted above, it is significant that the title given here and at the end of the text seems to suggest that it is a commentary (*vāṇṇanā*) on a *sutta*.²

If the covering-leaf title, *Mahāgaranibbānasuttavāṇṇanā*, is a true alternative title for this text, then it may provide some evidence that the text was composed in Thailand or Cambodia, since the *tappurisa* compound of the city of Nibbāna is formed in the manner standard in Thai and Khmer, rather than in the manner more commonly found in classical Pali (i.e. *Nibbānanagara*).³ There is nothing about the language

¹ *The Three Worlds According to King Ruang*, p. 329.

² A similar alternation between *sutta* and *vāṇṇanā* is found in the *Ākāravattārasutta*; see Jaini, *Ākāravattārasutta*, 194, 209.

³ I would like to thank Professor Oskar von Hinüber for pointing this out to me.

or contents of the text which allows us to suggest even a probable date of composition.¹

We can say more about the manuscript than the text. Given the origins of the collection at the École Française d’Extrême Orient, it seems probable that this manuscript was prepared in Cambodia. Moreover, the inscription on the covering leaf gives some valuable information about the date of the preparation of the manuscript. Despite a persistent problem² with the Pali here, we may translate this last passage as providing a date for the copying of the manuscript: “I wrote this in the year of the tiger, two thousand four hundred fifty eight years from the parinibbāna of the Buddha.” If we take 544 B.C.E. as the traditional date for the parinibbāna of the Buddha in Southeast Asia, this would give us a date for the manuscript about the year 1914–15 C.E.³ The dating according to the Buddhist Era seems to agree with the dating to the year of the Tiger in the twelve-year cycle. At the end of the manuscript the scribe has given his name and expressed his aspiration in

¹ Given that the linguistic variations found in this text, such as the suppression of geminate consonants, are also common in Southeast Asian Pali, it seems unlikely to me that such “irregularities” could be used as satisfactory evidence to establish a text’s date.

² I am unable to make any sense of *siṭesena*, although perhaps it further specifies the date of copying the manuscript, with the date written in a system like “the so-called *ka-ṭa-pa-ya* system” found in Sri Lankan and Burmese manuscripts; for references to this system of writing numbers, see *Burmese Manuscripts* Part 1, compiled by Heinz Bechert, Daw Khin Khin Su, and Daw Tin Tin Myint (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1979), pp. XIX–XX. This sentence appears in a number of other manuscripts in the collections of the École Française d’Extrême Orient in Paris with some variation in the spelling of this word; see the covering leaves to EFEO Pali 28, *Rathasenajātaka* (*satesena*), EFEO Pali 31, *Arabhimbajātaka* (*siṭesena*), EFEO Pali 32, and *Candasenajātaka* (*siṭesena*).

³ For some brief comments on the reckoning of dates in “Cambodian” manuscripts, see C.E. Godakumbura, *Catalogue of Cambodian and Burmese Pali Manuscripts*, (Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 1983), p. xvi.

copying the manuscript: “*Aham Indujotam likkhitam Buddhasāsane Buddho homi anāgate.*” The notion of becoming a Buddha in the *Buddhasāsana* is intriguing, although the aspiration to become a Buddha is quite frequent in manuscript colophons in Sri Lanka.¹

My attempts to find another copy of the text have not met with any success. The *Nibbānasutta* does not seem to be among the Cambodian manuscripts which have been copied by the Cornell University preservation project in Phnom Penh.² Although a text of the same title is listed by Louis Finot in his survey of manuscript holdings in Laos, Finot’s note seems to suggest that this text was related to the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*.³ George Cœdès has described a Lao-language text with the title *Nibbānasutta* in his catalogue of manuscripts in the Royal Library at Copenhagen; from his description, it does not seem likely that this text is a translation of the Pali *Nibbānasutta* with which we are concerned here.⁴ There are three texts with a very similar title listed in the *Catalogue of Palm-leaf Texts on Microfilm at the Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University 1978–86*, but I have not been able to compare these texts with the

¹ This aspiration is very common in the manuscripts found in the Nevill Collection in the British Library. See, for examples chosen almost at random, the eighteenth century copy of the *Dhammapada Sanne* (Or. 6600[52]) and the nineteenth century copy of the *Aggikkhandopama Sutta Pada Ānuma* (Or. 6599[6]), found in Somadasa, pp. 21, 110.

² I would like to thank Dr. Judy Ledgerwood for her kind assistance in checking whether the *Nibbānasutta* was among the texts microfilmed by the Cornell University Project.

³ Finot, p. 194.

⁴ Cœdès, p. 66. Cœdès, it should be noted, was hardly impressed by this text, and described it as “un discours assez banal.” It apparently includes an account of some rich merchants being freed from the *preta* world and ascending to a *devaloka* from hearing that *sutta*, something which is completely missing from the text edited here.

manuscript transcribed here.¹ The title does not appear in K.D. Somadasa’s survey of the manuscript holdings of Sri Lankan temple libraries.²

Since this is a first and necessarily provisional edition of the text, I have only attempted to transcribe accurately the manuscript available to me. I have made no emendations in the text as it is found in the manuscript, but I have given alternative readings in the notes in order to make some sense of the Pali or to clarify the Pali by comparison with the better known forms of classical Pali. Some of these clarifications are merely for the convenience of the reader since the text itself is quite consistent in its own usage, even if it is irregular by the standards of classical Pali, as for example with the creation or suppression of consonant geminates (such as -ññ- which are normally written -ñ- here).³ The edition provides numbers for each leaf (1a–1b, etc.), but also includes the letter-sequencers (*ka-ki*) given in the manuscript itself.

NIBBĀNASUTTA

[1a (ka)] Evam me sutam. Ekam samayam Bhagavā Savatthiyam viharati Jetavane Anāthapindikassa ārāme. Tasmim kho Bhagavā bhikkhūnā⁴ āmantesi bhikkhavo ti. Bhadante ti te bhikkhū Bhagavato paccasosum.⁵

¹ *Catalogue of Palm-Leaf Texts on Microfilm at the Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University 1978–86* (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, 1988), p. 124: s.v. *Nibbānasutra*. I would like to thank Professor Oskar von Hinüber for bringing the existence of these texts to my attention.

² K.D. Somadasa, *Lankāvē Puskola Pot Nämāvaliya* (Colombo: Cultural Department, 1959).

³ See note 1 on p. 98 above.

⁴ Read *bhikkhūnam*.

⁵ Read as *paccasosum*; on the suppression of geminates in *mūl* manuscripts, see Martini, p. 371, and Terrai, pp. 312–13.

Bhagavā etad avoca: Dhammam bhikkhave desissāmi ādikalyāṇam majhe kalyāṇam pariyosānakalyāṇam sāttham byañjanam¹ kevalam paripuṇṇam² parisuddham brahmacariyam pakāsissāmi yadidam Nibbānasuttam nāma dhammam cariyā.³ Sakkaccam sunātha⁴ sādhukam manasikarothā ti. Evam Bhante ti te bhikkhū Bhagavato paccasosam.⁵ Bhagavā etad avoca: Seyyathāpi bhikkhavo puriso mahānagaragantukāmo sakagharā nikkamitvā addhānamaggapaṭisanno;⁶ cattāro paccatthikā anubandhantā gacchanti. Aṭṭhaṅgate suriye anupubbena mahantam nadīm adassa.⁷ Udakanāvam pi adisvā vicaranto vuyhanakuṇapam disvā dakkhanahatthena⁸ tam gahetvā tam āruyha oramatirām⁹ pajahitvā paratirām¹⁰ patvā [1b] matakalevaraṁ chadetvā¹¹ nātāvā¹² suvattham nivāsetvā sugandham vilimpetvā attānam alaṅkārehi alaṅkaritvā ujumaggam paṭipanno¹³ mahānagarābhimukhena pāyāsi.¹⁴ Bhikkhave yathā puriso mahānagaragantukāmo addhānamaggapaṭipanno¹⁵ eva yogāvacaro gharāvāsam pajihitvā¹⁶ arañne¹⁷ vasati. Yathā

¹ The more usual phrase would be *sāttham sabyañjanam*.

² Read *kevalapuṇṇam*.

³ Read *dhammacariyam*; full stop added. Compare these sentences to M I 280 and Nett 5.

⁴ Read *sunātha*.

⁵ Read *paccassosum*.

⁶ Read *paṭipanno*; Jacqueline Filliozat noticed that the palmleaf is inscribed *paṭipanno*, but the manuscript was corrected in ink to *paṭisanno*.

⁷ Read *addasa*; see Terral, p. 311, for inversion of geminates in aorist forms.

⁸ Read *dakkhiṇahatthe*.

⁹ Read *orimatirām*; see Terral, p. 310, for the confusion between long ī and short ī.

¹⁰ Read *paratirām*.

¹¹ Read *chaddetvā* or alternatively *chādetvā*. I think the former is preferable; see Terral, p. 314, for dentals replacing cerebrals and Terral, pp. 312–13, for the suppression of geminates.

¹² From *nahāyati*; read *nahātvā*. See Terral, p. 337, concerning *nāyati* as an acceptable form.

¹³ Manuscript adds a stop here.

¹⁴ Full stop added.

¹⁵ Manuscript adds a stop here.

cattāro paccatthikā tam anubandhantā¹ evam jānāti²-jarā-byādhi-maraṇam datthabbam. Yathā aṭṭhaṅgamite suriye evam parihinakāyo³ datthabbo. Yathā mahantam nadīm adassa⁴ evam taṇhāyo⁵ datthabbo. Yathā udakanāvam pi adisvā evam samsādakkhataraṇam⁶ datthabbam. Yathā vuyhamānam kuṇapam disvā evam karajakāyo datthabbo yathā dakkhiṇahatthena tam gahetvā evam abhipasādā⁷ datthabbā. Yathā kuṇapam āruyha evam cittapasādām datthabbam. Yathā oramatirām⁸ pajahitvā evam samsāradukkhatarāṇam datthabbam. Yathā param tīram patvā evam muti⁹ datthabbam. Yathā matakalevaraṁ chadetvā¹⁰ evam karajakāyam datthabbam. Yathā nātāvā¹¹ evam paññā¹² datthabā¹³ [2a (kā)] yathā suvattham nivāsetvā evam hiri-ottappam datthabbam. Yathā sugandham visippetvā¹⁴ evam sillagandham¹⁵ datthabbam. Yathā attānam alaṅkārehi alaṅkaritvā evam sotāpattiphalam anāgāmiphalam arahattaphalam datthabbam. Yathā ujum maggapaṭipanno¹⁶ evam aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo datthabbo. Yathā mahānagarābhimukhena pāyāsi evam mahānibbānamahānagaram datthabbam. Tasmim yeva

¹⁶ Read *pajahitvā*.

¹⁷ Read *araññe*.

¹ Read *anubandhantā*; on added geminations in “Cambodian” manuscripts, see Terral, pp. 310–11.

² Read *jāti*.

³ Read *parihinakāyo*.

⁴ Read *addasa*.

⁵ Seems to be a case-confusion by contamination ?

⁶ Read *samsāradukkhatarāṇam*.

⁷ Read *abhipasādā*.

⁸ Read *orimatirām*.

⁹ A better reading might be *mutti*.

¹⁰ Read *chaddetvā* or alternatively *chādetvā*.

¹¹ Read *nātāvā*.

¹² Read *paññā*.

¹³ Read *datthabbā*.

¹⁴ Read *vilimpetvā*.

¹⁵ Read *sillagandham*.

¹⁶ Read *ujumaggapaṭipanno*.

nibbānamage¹-tanatalam² samphasantam³ viya kilesamahiruham⁴ adassa⁵ abhayañ ca.⁶ Kilesamahiruho⁷ nibbānamaggasacchādito.⁸ Kīdiso⁹ kilesamahiruho ? Pañcakhandhabhūmitalasanno avijāvijapabhavo¹⁰ kāyavacimanoduccaritabhāvasitam¹¹ jalavarasiñci.¹² Lobhaviruyha¹³-pula¹⁴-dhāritā dosasākhāparikinno¹⁵ mohapallavapattaganibhūto anuparimānakurasampanno¹⁶ vicchikicchā¹⁷-piñjarapito¹⁸ thinamidam bhusabharito¹⁹ ahirikamanotappavikasitakusumo²⁰ jātijarābyādhimarañajalasañchanno²¹ [2b] narakatiracchānapeta-asurakāyavisessa²²-dijagāñakhāditaphalo evarūpo kilesamahīraho²³ nibbānamaggasacchādito.²⁴ Tamcchinditum²⁵ vañtatī ti. Yadi chindanto na sāmaññasatñhena²⁶ chindi

¹ Reading *nibbānamagge* would seem most obvious, but see next note.

² Read *tam thalam*. It is also possible for the manuscript to be read *ganatalam* (*t* and *g* are easily confused in *mūl* script) and perhaps the scribe may have intended to write *nibbānamaggena*.

³ Read *samphassantam*.

⁴ Read *mahiruham*.

⁵ Read *addasa*.

⁶ Read perhaps *bhayañ ca* ? Full stop added.

⁷ Read *mahiruho*.

⁸ Read *sañchādito*.

⁹ Manuscript adds a stop here.

¹⁰ Read *avijābījappabhavo* or alternatively *avijāvijāpabhavo*.

¹¹ Read *kāyavacimanoduccaritabhāvasito*.

¹² Read *pallavararāsi ca*; or perhaps *jalāvāram siñci* ?

¹³ Read *virūha-*.

¹⁴ Read *phala*, or alternatively *mūla*.

¹⁵ Read *parikinno*.

¹⁶ Read *anuparimānakurasampanno*.

¹⁷ Read *vicikicchā-*.

¹⁸ Read *piñjarapito*.

¹⁹ Read *thīnamiddhabhusabharito* ?

²⁰ Read *ahirimanottappavikasitakusumo*.

²¹ Read alternatively *jātijarābyādhimarañajalasañchanno*.

²² Read *-visesa-*.

²³ Read *kilesamahiruho*.

²⁴ Read *nibbānamaggasañchādito*; full stop added.

²⁵ Read *tam chinditum*.

na pharasunā vāsiyā chindi ti yeva.¹ Api ca kho añata² nisitasamādhisilāya³ maggaññapharasunā chinditum sakkoti. Seyyathāpi bhikkhave parikinno parikkhāro sunisitasattham ādāya vanantaram pavisitvā mahārukkañam samphassamāno⁴ kiñ pañhamam chindāmī ti mañati.⁵ Handa mūlam chindāmī ti mūlam chinditvā aggam chinditvā nirasesam⁶ chinditvā nirasesam⁷ chinditvā yathā sukham gacchati. Evam eva yogāvacaro sattavidhakammaññāparikinno silamayadadalha-parikkhāro⁸ sunisita⁹-maggaññapharasum ādāya vivekavanantara-kilesasākhañam chinditvā yathā sukham tiññati yeva. Atite¹⁰ sañkilesamahīruho¹¹ nibbānamahānagaram paññayati.¹² Kenathena nibbānam pavuccati ? Sitalatthena¹³ [3a (ki)] cando viya nibbānam. Kilesussanatthena¹⁴ suriye¹⁵ viya nibbānam. Patiññānatthena pathavī¹⁶ viya nibbānam. Acalanatthena seleñdo¹⁷ viya nibbānam. Ratanānam sambhutatthena¹⁸ sāgaro viya nibbānam. Samodhānatthena sudhammā

²⁶ Read *sāmaññasatthena*.

¹ Read *yadi chindanto ... chindati ... chindati yevāti*.

² Read *aññathā*; see Terral, p. 315, for replacement of an aspirated consonant by a simple consonant.

³ Read *nisitasamādhisilena*.

⁴ Read *sampassamāno*.

⁵ Read *maññati*.

⁶ Read *majjhām* ?

⁷ Alternatively to previous note, read here *niravasesam*, or take this second *niravasesam chinditvā* as an unintentional repetition.

⁸ Read *silamayadadalha-parikkhāro*.

⁹ Read *sunisita*.

¹⁰ Read *atite*.

¹¹ Read *sañkilesamahīruhe*; this reading and the one preceding are not entirely satisfactory.

¹² Read *paññayati*.

¹³ Read *sitalatthena*.

¹⁴ Read *kilesussanatthena*.

¹⁵ Read *suriyo*.

¹⁶ Read *pathavī*.

¹⁷ Read *selendo* or *selindo*.

¹⁸ Read *sambhutatthena*, or alternatively, *sambhūtatthena*.

viya nibbānam. Tañ ca nibbānam pathavi¹ natthi āpo natthi tejo natthi vāyo natthi sitam² natthi uñham natthi. Yasmā ajāti-abyādhi-marañam³ khemam̄ santam̄ paramam̄ sukham̄ padam̄ evam̄ nibbānamahānagaram. Tañ ca nibbānamahānagaram sapākāram̄ saddhāra⁴-saṭālakam̄⁵ sa-parikkham̄⁶ savithi⁷ sa-antarāpanam̄ sathambham̄ sagabbham̄ sasayanam̄ sapallam̄kam̄ sapadipajalitam̄⁸ sapokkharañim̄ sasitajalaparipuññam̄⁹ sabālukam̄¹⁰ sabhamarasevitam̄ saham̄sa-sacākavāka¹¹-jivajivaka¹²-kokila-mayura-koñcāgañasevitam̄ evam̄ nibbānamahānagaram. Kin tam̄ pākāram̄ ? Silapākāram̄.¹³ Kin tam̄ pākāram̄ ?¹⁴ Nānam̄ dvāram̄. Kin tam̄ ṭālakam̄ ?¹⁵ Samādhīṭālakam̄.¹⁶ Kin tam̄ parikkham̄ ?¹⁷ Mettāparikkham̄. Kin tam̄¹⁸ vithim̄ ?¹⁹ Cattālisasamathakammathānavithim̄²⁰ Cin²¹ tam̄ antarāpanam̄ ? Bodhipakkhiya-antarāpanam̄. Kin tam̄ thambham̄ ? Viriyathambham̄.²² [3b] Kin tam̄ gabbham̄ ? Abhidhammapakarañā-

¹ Read *pathavi*.

² Read *sitam*.

³ Read *ajāti-ajarā-abyādhi-amarañam* ?

⁴ Read *sadvāra*.

⁵ Read *sāṭālakam*; it might also be possible to read *sataṭālakam*.

⁶ Read *parikkham*.

⁷ Read *savithi*.

⁸ Read *sapadipajalitam*.

⁹ Read *sasitajalaparipuññam*.

¹⁰ Read *savālukam*.

¹¹ Read *sacakkavāka*.

¹² Read *jīvamjīvaka*.

¹³ Read *Silapākāram*.

¹⁴ Read *dvāram*.

¹⁵ Read *atṭālakam* or alternatively *talākam*.

¹⁶ Read *samādhī-atṭālakam* or alternatively *samādhītalākam*; see previous note.

¹⁷ Read *parikkham*.

¹⁸ Read *tā*; the structure of the passage (*kin tam* ...) may have discouraged the use of feminine or plural forms.

¹⁹ Read *vithi*.

²⁰ Read *cattālisasamathakammathānavithi*.

²¹ Read *Kin*.

²² Read *Viriyathambham*.

gabbham̄.¹ Kin tam̄ sayanam̄ ? Nikkhammasayanam̄.² Kin tam̄ pallañkam̄ ? Vimuttiñānapallañkam̄. Kin tam̄ padipajalitam̄ ? Vimuttiñānadasanapadipajalitam̄.³ Kin tam̄ pokkarani ? Bhāvanā-pokkharani. Kin tam̄ sītajalaparipuññam̄ ? Karuñāsītajalaparipuññam̄.⁴ Kin tam̄ bālukam̄ ?⁵ Aṭṭhārasabuddhañānabālukam̄.⁶ Kin tam̄ bhamarasevitam̄ ? Khīñāsavabhamarasevitam̄.⁷ Kin tam̄ hamṣa-cākavāka-jivajivaka-kokila-mayura-koñcāgañasevitam̄ ?⁸ Buddha-arahanta-nidosasamkilesa-hamṣa-cākavāka-jivajivaka-kokila-mayura-koñcāgañasevitam̄.⁹ Evam̄ nibbānamahānagaram̄ santam̄ lenam̄ dhuram̄¹⁰ iti parāyanam̄. Kena kasmiñ gamissati ? Na hatthiyānena vā na assayānena vā na rathassayānena vā na dolāyayānena¹¹ vā na sivikāyayānena¹² vā na upāhanayānena vā na padagamaneva¹³ vā api ca kho aññatra¹⁴ Buddhasarañena Dhammasarañena Samghasarañena evarūpena Dhammasavañe¹⁵ vā tam̄ gantum̄ vattati. Yathā hi yo ca Buddhañ ca Dhammasamghañ ca sarañam̄ gato āpadam̄ so na gaccheyya, adhigaccheya¹⁶ padam̄ sukhan ti. Iti Bhagavā nibbānapañisamyuttā Dhammapariyāyagāthā [4a (ki)] bhikkhūnam̄ desesi. Tena vuttam̄:

¹ Read *abhidhammapakarañagabbham*.

² Read *nekkhammasayanam*.

³ Read *vimuttiñānadasanapadipajalitam*.

⁴ Read *karuñāsītajalaparipuññam*.

⁵ Read *vālukam*.

⁶ Read *aṭṭhārasabuddhañānabālukam*.

⁷ Read *Khīñāsavabhamarasevitam*.

⁸ Read *hamṣa-cākavāka-jivamjīvaka-kokila-mayūrakoñcāgañasevitam*.

⁹ Read *Buddha-arahanta-niddosasamkilesa-hamṣacakkavākajīvamjīvaka-kokila-mayūrakoñcāgañasevitam*.

¹⁰ Read *dhuvam* ?

¹¹ Read *dolāyānena*.

¹² Read *sivikāyānena*.

¹³ Read *padagamanena*.

¹⁴ Read *aññatra*.

¹⁵ Read *Dhammasavañena*.

¹⁶ Read *adhigaccheyya*.

Tumhe ārabbhatha¹ nikhamatha yuñjatha buddhasāsane
 dhunātha maccuno yesam² nañgāram va kuñjaro.³
 Yo imasmim Dhammavinaye appamatto viharati
 pahāya jatisamsāram⁴ dukkhasantam⁵ karissatha.⁶

Santam panitam⁷ apasamsava⁸-abhayam accutam
 ajāti-ajarā-khemam nibbānam nāma bbyadisan⁹ ti.¹⁰

Nibbānasuttavāññanā nitthitā.¹¹

¹ Read ārabbhatha.

² Read senam.

³ Compare to Th 256 = S I 156 = Mil 245. See also *Lokapaññatti*, edited by Eugène Denis (Lille: Reproduction des Thèses, Université de Lille III, 1977), Vol. I, p. 5.

⁴ Read jatisamsāram.

⁵ Read dukkhasantam.

⁶ Read karissati.

⁷ Read panitam.

⁸ Read apasamsavā.

⁹ Read byādisan ti.

¹⁰ Compare to the closing verse of *Tuññilovādasutta* (here emended from what appears at *Tuññilovāda* 194):

*Santam panitam amalam sivam abhayam accutam
 Ajaram amatam khemam nibbānam nāma idisan ti*

¹¹ Read nitthitā.

TRANSLATION

Thus I have heard. At one time the Blessed One was living at Savatthi in the Jetavana garden of Anāthapiñḍaka. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “O monks,” and those monks replied to the Blessed One, “Sir.” The Blessed One said this: “O monks, I will teach the Dhamma which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good at the end, with its own meaning and form;¹ I will explain the holy life which is entirely perfect and pure, that is, the (account of the) observance of the good life² called the *Nibbānasutta*. Listen carefully and bear it in mind well.” “Yes, O Sir,” those monks replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this: “Just as, O monks, a man who desires to go to a great city, having left his own house, becomes one going along the high road; four pursuing enemies also go (on that road). In the course of time, when the sun was setting, he saw a great river. Not seeing a boat, and wandering about, he saw a corpse being carried (by the current). Taking it with the right hand, and climbing onto the corpse, he abandoned the near shore and reached the other shore. He discarded (the corpse), washed, put on fine cloth, smeared (himself) with fragrant perfume, adorned himself with ornaments, and going along the straight road, he set out towards the great city.

O monks, just like the man desiring to go to the great city goes along the high road is the *yogāvacaro* who renounces the household life and lives in the forest. Birth, old age, sickness, and death are to be seen as just like the four enemies pursuing him. The decaying body is to be regarded as like the setting sun. Desire is to be seen as the great river which he saw. (Looking for something for) crossing the suffering of *samsāra* is like not seeing a boat. The body born from *kamma* is to be regarded as the corpse being carried (by the current) which he saw.

¹ sāttham sabyañjanam.

² dhammacariyam.

Trust¹ is to be seen as like when he took it with his right hand. Mental calm² is to be seen as like the climbing on the corpse. Crossing the suffering of *samsāra* is to be seen as like abandoning the near shore. Freedom is to be seen as reaching the other shore. The karma-born body is to be seen as like the corpse which he threw away. Wisdom is like him bathing; shame-and-modesty are like his putting on fine cloth; the perfume of virtue³ is like the perfume with which he anointed himself. The fruits of the stream-winner, once-returner, and arahant are like the ornaments with which he adorned himself.⁴ The eightfold path is to be seen as like the straight road he went on. The great city of Nibbāna is like the great city he went towards.

There he saw a dreadful great tree of defilements (which looked) as if it were blocking⁵ that place on the road to Nibbāna. The great tree of defilements covered the road to Nibbāna. What was this great tree of defilements like ? It was sunk in the earth of the five aggregates, its origin was the seed of ignorance, and it was a mass of sprouts which were supported by the condition of misbehaviour in body, speech, and mind. It bore fruits which grew from greed, and it was surrounded by branches of hate. It had a host of leaves and sprouts of delusion, it possessed small⁶ red and yellow shoots of doubt, and it bore the heavy (weight of) sloth and torpor.⁷ It had flowers blossoming with shamelessness and lack of remorse and was covered with the moisture of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Its fruit was eaten by flocks of birds, (beings with) the particular bodies of hell-dwellers, animals, ghosts, and

¹ *abhippasāda*.

² *cittapasādām*.

³ *sīlagandham*; see Dhp 55 and Vism 58 for other uses of this metaphor.

⁴ Note that the fruit of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmiphalam*) is omitted.

⁵ *samphassantam*. This translation is somewhat loose, although the passage is itself obscure.

⁶ *anuparimāṇa* ?

⁷ *vicikicchā* and *thīnamiddha* are two of the five ethical obstacles (*nīvarana*).

asuras. The tree of defilements which was like that covered the road to Nibbāna.

“It would be right to cut it down,” (he thought). Although he was cutting it, he did not cut it with a common sword, he did not cut it with an axe or even with an adze. But, in a different manner, it was possible to cut it with an axe of the knowledge of the Path sharpened on concentration and virtue.¹ Just as, O monks, (a man) equipped and having the necessary requisites, taking a very sharp axe, enters the forest and seeing a great tree, he thinks, “What should I cut first ?” Thinking “Now I will cut the root,” he cuts the root, then the top, and then the middle. Having cut it completely, he goes on satisfied. Just so, the *yogāvacaro*, equipped with the sevenfold subjects of meditation and having requisites brilliant with virtue, takes his well-sharpened axe of Path-knowledge, and cuts the isolated² tree³ of the defilements in the middle of the forest and so he gains happiness. When the tree of defilements is overcome,⁴ the great city of Nibbāna is clearly seen.

In what sense is Nibbāna spoken of ? Nibbāna is like the moon in the sense that it is cool, and it is like the sun in the sense that it dries up defilements. Nibbāna is like the earth since it is a support, like a mighty mountain⁵ since it is unmoving, like the ocean since it is the treasury⁶ of jewels, like good *dhammas* since it is a collocation. But this

¹ *nisitasamādhisilena*.

² *viveka*.

³ *sākham*.

⁴ *atīte samkilesamahīruhe*.

⁵ *selindo*, literally “lord of rock.” *Sela* also means “crystal,” and it might be recalled here that Nibbāna is called a crystal city in a Shan chronicle, *The Pādāeng Chronicle*; see *The Pādāeng Chronicle and the Jengtung State Chronicle Translated*, translated by Sao Sāimōng Mangrai (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1981), p. 100.

⁶ *sambhata*.

Nibbāna is not the earth, it is not water, it is not light, it is not wind, it is not cold, it is not heat. It is the great city of Nibbāna because it is without birth, old age, sickness, and death, because it is calm, peaceful, permanent,¹ the place of happiness.

The great city of Nibbāna has an encircling wall, a gate, a watchtower, a moat, streets, a bazaar, a pillar, an interior (place), a bed, a couch, the brightness of lamps, a lake filled with cool water and sand; it is frequented by bees and by flocks of geese, cakkavāka birds, pheasants, cuckoos, peacocks and heron. What is that encircling wall ? The wall of virtue.² What is that gate ? Knowledge is the gate. What is that watchtower ? The watchtower of concentration. What is that moat ? The encircling ditch of loving kindness. What are those streets ? The streets of the forty meditation topics.³ What is that bazaar ? The bazaar of the constituents of enlightenment. What is that pillar ? The pillar is effort. What is that interior (place) ? The interior place of the books of the Abhidhamma. What is that bed ? The bed of renunciation. What is that couch ? The couch of release. What is that brightness of lamps ? The brightness of the lamps of the vision that comes with liberating knowledge.⁴ What is that lake ? The lake of meditation. What is that cool water which fills it ? It is filled with the cool water of compassion. What is that sand ? The eighteen kinds of Buddha-knowledge are the sand. What are those bees that frequent it ?⁵ Those who are free from the cankers⁶ are the bees which frequent it. What are the flocks of geese, cakkavāka birds, pheasants, cuckoos, peacocks, and heron which frequent it ? Buddhas, arahants and those who are free of

¹ *dhuvam*.

² *silapākāram*; perhaps a pun on *silāpākāram*, a wall of stone.

³ See Vism 187 where the metaphor is also used.

⁴ *vimuttiñāñadassana*.

⁵ The translation is necessarily loose. More literally it would be "What is it that is frequented by bees ?"

⁶ *khīnāsava*, i.e. arahants.

defilements and faults¹ are the flocks of geese, cakkavāka birds, pheasants, cuckoos, peacocks, and heron which frequent it. Thus the great city of Nibbāna is peaceful, a refuge, the topmost, and thus the final goal.

By what, in what, does one go ? Not by an elephant carriage, nor by a horse carriage, nor by a royal horse carriage, nor a palanquin, nor by a litter, nor by (wearing) sandals, nor by going barefoot.² One ought to go to it in a different manner, by taking refuge in the Buddha, by taking refuge in the Dhamma, by taking refuge in the Saṅgha, and by listening to the teaching of the Dhamma in texts like this.³ Anyone who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha does not go to misfortune, (but rather) he attains a place of happiness." Then the Lord taught the monks Dhamma-verses connected with Nibbāna. It was said by him:

Exert yourselves, go forth, devote yourselves to the Buddha's teaching. Knock down the army of death as an elephant knocks down a reed-hut.

Whoever will dwell vigilant in this doctrine and discipline, eliminating journeying-on from rebirth to rebirth will put an end to pain.⁴

¹ *niddosasamkilesa*.

² *padagamanena*.

³ *evarūpena Dhammasavārenā*.

⁴ Translation of *Theragāthā* 256-57 by K.R. Norman, *The Elders' Verses I: Theragāthā* (London: Pali Text Society, 1969), p. 30; I would like to thank Professor G.D. Wijayawardhana and Steven Collins who each identified this verse. See p. xxi of Norman's introduction for a discussion of multiple ascriptions of verses in canonical literature.

Nibbāna is shown to be peaceful, excellent, without fear because it is not producing (anything else), permanent, without birth, without old age, full of peace.

The exposition on the *Nibbānasutta* is finished.

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PĀLI MANUSCRIPTS OF SRI LANKA IN THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Out of the rich collection of Pāli manuscripts preserved in the Cambridge University Library, forty-two Sri Lankan manuscripts, written mostly in the Sinhala script, are listed below. In a few cases, the Roman script is used. Most of the manuscripts are written on palm-leaves, some on paper. They all belong to the 19th century.

This list is the result of a rapid survey of these manuscripts undertaken especially with the aim of identifying the unidentified items.¹ In the short period (eleven working days, from 7 to 19 October 1991), sixty-six manuscripts were examined, the forty-two Pāli manuscripts referred to above, and twenty-four Sinhala manuscripts, including six medical texts.²

The Sinhala manuscripts have, however, a relevance to Pāli literature due to the fact that Sinhala literature is predominantly inspired by Buddhism. Especially, the Jātakas have provided the themes for the bulk of Sinhala literary works right up to modern times. With regard to the list of Sinhala manuscripts given in the Appendix, it is worth remembering that the *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* (item 13) and the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* (item 14) have as their main source the *Rasavāhini* and the *Dhammapadatthakathā*, respectively. In fact, the author of the *Saddharmālaṅkāraya*, echoing the aim of all classical Sinhala authors, says that his work, "although written in a different language is the same

¹ I am grateful to Prof. Dr Ronald E. Emmerick, Prof. K.R. Norman and Mr R.C. Jamieson (Keeper of the Sanskrit manuscripts of the Oriental Department of the Cambridge University Library) for being instrumental in organising that survey, financed by the Rapson Fund.

² A list of these Sinhala manuscripts is given in an Appendix at the end of this paper.